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**The Cleveland Museum of Art**

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CHARDIN 1699-1779 AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART JUNE 6 THROUGH AUGUST 12

More than 90 works of Jean Siméon Chardin (1699-1779), generally considered the most important still-life painter of eighteenth century France and one of the greatest painters of any period, will be on view free at The Cleveland Museum of Art from June 6 through August 12, 1979.

Chardin 1699-1779 is the first comprehensive exhibition in this century and first major retrospective ever assembled of the paintings of an artist whose genius and profound influence was acknowledged by such diverse painters as Ingres, Delacroix, Manet, Cézanne and Van Gogh. The show traces an extraordinary career--from the arresting realism of Chardin's early still lifes and decorative allegories (The Attributes of the Arts and Sciences) through the warm intimacy of his domestic scenes to the frank pastel portrait of his wife painted shortly before his death at the age of 80.

Many of these canvases, in private collections for generations, have not been shown publicly since Chardin's death and may not be seen together again in our lifetime. They have been assembled, with others from public and private collections throughout Europe and North America, to mark the bi-centennial of the artist's death by the National Museums of France in collaboration with The Cleveland Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the only other city in America to which the exhibition will travel (September 3 through November 19, 1979).

Fifty-three pictures have been lent by 21 public and private collections in France--13 from the Louvre and other key works from private collections, including that of the descendants of the Marcille family, the most important collectors of

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Chardin active in the last century. The 27 pictures from the U.S. and Canada include major Chardins on loan from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., The Art Institute of Chicago, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The National Gallery of Canada.

Restricted by his lack of a formal education to what was then looked upon as the lowliest and least demanding of subject matters, the still life, Chardin raised that genre to new levels of subtlety. No bagged pheasant or piece of fruit, no mixing bowl or kitchen utensil was too lowly a subject.

When he turned in his early thirties (around 1733) to painting simple domestic scenes, he opened up another new world of insights. Proust and others have found a "witchery" in Chardin's ability to capture a room full of relationships: between people and the things they use in their daily lives, between mothers and their small daughters, between household pets and familiar furniture. Proust finds a sense of "schedules" and comfortable old habits.

After 1748, at the height of his fame, Chardin turned again to the still life. Just as he had been drawn to the quiet, barely conscious moments of everyday life as somehow more typical, more nearly quintessential, than the tragic or heroic moments, he seemed to be striving in his later years to distill an even more elemental simplicity. These canvases reveal a growing preoccupation with relationships of light and shadow and of mass and volume that anticipate Cézanne and the cubists.

Following his death in 1779 Chardin was first neglected, then rediscovered by successive generations of art historians and painters who found in his painterly values, his insistence on working from life, and his wonderful technique, a master to learn from and to measure themselves against. But the dispersal of his works among many private collections and smaller museums both throughout France

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and abroad has discouraged the assembling of his works for careful study and comparison.

The exhibition, which opened this spring at the Grand Palais in Paris to enthusiastic critical reviews, was prepared by Pierre Rosenberg, a curator of paintings at the Louvre. It is supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and by a federal indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities. Dr. William S. Talbot, associate curator of paintings at The Cleveland Museum of Art, is acting as liason for the showings here.

The 428-page American translation of Rosenberg's French catalogue of the exhibition (available in soft cover at the Museum's sales desk) contains over 300 black and white illustrations and 24 color plates, reproducing all the works in the exhibition as well as details from selected works and other versions Chardin did of some of his paintings. The catalogue includes an illuminating introduction and eight essays by Rosenberg dealing with Chardin's life, critical assessments of his work from his own time to the present, the eighteenth-century kitchen utensils and other household objects found in Chardin's paintings, and his changing inclinations toward various subject matters throughout a career that spanned nearly fifty years.

A free illustrated guide to the exhibition prepared by Mark Johnson, an instructor in The Cleveland Museum of Art's Department of Art History and Education, will be available to everyone attending the exhibition.

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For additional information, photographs, or color transparencies, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.